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Freedom Comes from the End: Reconstructing the Meaning of Freedom After Creation

Abstract. This paper argues for a radical reconceptualization of freedom as an **ontological state** attained after the completion of creative work. Traditional theories of freedom – whether Hobbes's mechanical absence of external impediment, Mill's liberal harm‑principle, or Sartre's existential "condemned" liberty – overlook the temporal dimension by which creativity transforms a subject. Drawing on existential and phenomenological methods, we show that creative activity (artistic, intellectual, or spiritual) both constrains and liberates the subject: one is "tied" to the task while making, but upon completion of the creation one enters a qualitatively new freedom. We examine this hypothesis through four interrelated lenses: the paradoxes of creation, the dialectic of ownership and detachment, freedom as self‑proof and identity formation, and the role of contemplation and stillness after action. The synthesis is an **ontological restructuring of freedom**: freedom is not merely the absence of external restraint, nor merely radical choice, but a state of completeness or fullness realized when one's creative project is consummated. This account diverges from classical liberal and existential accounts by locating freedom in the end of creation, when the agent's being is transformed. We defend this view with primary texts and cross‑cultural sources – Hobbes, Mill, Sartre, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Zen Buddhism (Dōgen) – and conclude that after creation there emerges a profound freedom embedded in the very being of the creator.

Introduction

What is **freedom**? Contemporary philosophers often define it in political or psychological terms – as the absence of external constraints or as the pure capacity to choose (negative vs. positive liberty) – or as an existential condition of responsibility. Yet these accounts overlook an important dimension of human life: creative action. When we devote ourselves to making something (a poem, a meal, a theory), we experience a unique tension. We feel bound to our task by its demands, yet those tasks also promise a new possibility beyond ourselves. This tension suggests a different story about freedom. We propose that **freedom is realized at the end of creation**, when a creative effort is completed. In this ontological state one's being is transformed: the project is finished, the infinite potentiality of the task has taken form, and one's self is somehow expanded. Such freedom "after creation" is not captured by standard liberal or existential theories.

Our motivation is twofold. First, in the face of mounting existential anxiety, the modern focus on freedom as constant choice can feel burdensome. Sartre famously observed that we are "condemned to be free," held hostage by our own endless responsibilities [1]. Yet when an artist lays down her brush or a philosopher completes an essay, there is often a profound sense of release and wholeness. This suggests a gap: **existing theories fail to account for the freedom of consummated creativity**. Second, societies stress progress and production, but rarely reflect on what happens after a project is done. Our research question is thus: What is the nature of freedom achieved by the very act of completing a creative endeavor? We will argue that upon completion of creation the agent enters an ontologically free state of being.

To develop this thesis, we first review the literature on freedom. We contrast Hobbes's and Mill's classical theories of liberty with existential and Eastern perspectives. We then articulate our **methodology** – an existential‑phenomenological approach that focuses on lived experience in the creative moment and its

aftermath. The body of the paper unfolds in five arguments: (1) the paradox of creation (creativity both limits and releases the agent), (2) the dialectic of ownership and detachment (the creator's relation to the work), (3) self‑proof and identity (creative acts as self‑definition), (4) contemplation and stillness (the reflective state after action), and finally (5) the ontological restructuring of freedom (framing freedom as a post‑creative state). A thorough conclusion synthesizes how these elements combine into a new concept of freedom – one that emerges only **after** creative purpose is fulfilled.

Literature Review

The classical and modern philosophical accounts of freedom emphasize process over completion. We here sketch key positions to identify the gap our theory fills.

Hobbes and Mill: Freedom as Non‑Constraint

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) defined freedom in mechanistic terms. In Leviathan Hobbes writes that liberty (libertas) is merely "the absence of opposition" or "external impediments to motion" [2]. In other words, a person is free so long as nothing physically prevents him from acting on his will. Hobbes sharply distinguishes this from power (internal ability): if a sick man cannot walk, he lacks power but not freedom (no one is restraining him) [3]. Thus Hobbes's concept is strictly negative and physical: freedom is unimpeded capability. He explicitly says a free person "is he, that in those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to do" [4]. In Hobbes's view, freedom is any unforced movement; it does not presuppose moral agency or purpose.

This Hobbesian view contrasts with classical liberal ideals such as those in John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). In On Liberty (1859), Mill defines freedom as non‑interference in one's pursuit of good: "The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs" [5]. Mill's account is broader: it is still negative (freedom = absence of coercion) but specifically humanistic and moral. Individuals guard their "inward domain of consciousness" and may "frame the plan of our life to suit our own character" so long as we cause no harm [6]. Mill's famous harm principle formalizes that personal liberty ends where others are harmed. Notably, Mill emphasizes potentiality: the option to act as we wish in principle, constrained only by external checks. This is a potential freedom, not tied to the completion of projects.

In sum, classical theories (including Hobbes and Locke) view freedom mainly as an instrumental condition (lack of interference) or ability. Isaiah Berlin later classified these as "negative" (Hobbes/Mill) vs. "positive" (self‑realization) liberty. But even "positive liberty" for many (e.g. rational self‑rule) did not explicitly include an end state after creation. Crucially, neither Hobbes nor Mill considers how freedom might transform after one has acted. They assume an ongoing potential to act, not a freedom that emerges upon finishing an act. The "gap" in these theories is the end of action: they presuppose that as long as no obstacle remains, freedom persists – they have no notion of freedom settling or ripening after creation.

Sartre and Existential Freedom

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) famously argued that human beings are fundamentally free – indeed, "condemned to be free" – precisely because there is no fixed human essence or divine plan [1]. In Existentialism is a Humanism (1946), Sartre asserts that we are "left alone, without excuse," since in the absence of God all values must be chosen by us. He writes, "Man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty" [1]. Here freedom is ontologically inescapable: we must constantly choose what we become. There is no neutrality, and every choice

projects value into being. However, Sartre's liberty is also fraught: it brings anguish and responsibility. He emphasizes that one cannot rely on any external sign or inner drive for action ("feeling is formed by the deeds that one does" [7]) but must invent oneself at every moment.

Sartre's account is about endless becoming. Freedom is never completed; it is the "being of man" itself, a perpetually open transcendence. One does not achieve a final freedom; rather, one is always in motion, creating himself. This existential view contrasts with our project's focus. Whereas Sartre sees freedom as a permanent, restless project, we want to show that after a creative project is done there is a different kind of freedom: a settled, "restful" freedom. In fact, Sartre's own example of the young man choosing between aiding his mother or fighting in the resistance illustrates this: the youth can only gauge his love by acting upon it [8] . His identity and values are validated by completion of an action – an important insight for our theme. But Sartre stops short of recognizing any unique freedom following that action; for him, the youth is simply "free, therefore invent" [9] in every subsequent moment.

Nietzsche: Will to Power and Creative Freedom

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) offers a more enigmatic perspective. He views life as driven by the will to power, not mere survival. For Nietzsche, freedom is intertwined with the creative assertion of one's will against given values. His aphorism "One must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star" suggests that inner turmoil (potential) is necessary for the creative act [10] . Nietzsche's overman is the creator of values, who imposes form on existence. Yet he also acknowledges that creation engenders constraint: what is created stands with its own weight. For example, in Thus Spoke Zarathustra he portrays the creator who, having given form, eventually becomes subject to it. Nietzsche admires the act of creating (art, values), but he does not explicitly discuss any freedom after the creation is complete – his focus is on becoming, overcoming, and eternal recurrence. Nonetheless, his idea of self-overcoming and the affirmation of existence (as through art) hints that one's freedom is bound up with the capacity to create. We will later draw on Nietzsche's emphasis on creative force, but note that he, like Sartre, does not dwell on completion.

Rilke and the Poetics of Change

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) provides a more poetic but insightful angle. In his poem Archaic Torso of Apollo he concludes with the imperative: "You must change your life" [10] . The context is a sculpted torso whose "vision" compels transformation in the viewer. This suggests that art's revelation forces a reconfiguration of self. In Rilke's other writings (e.g. Letters to a Young Poet), he links creativity with solitude and inner necessity: an authentic work arises only out of an "inseparable world" of the artist's experiences. While Rilke is not systematic in definitions, he offers the intuition that the completion of an artwork (or its encounter) precipitates a profound freedom to change. We take Rilke's poetic insight as a clue: creative acts endow us with new possibilities of being.

Zen Buddhism and Dōgen

Finally, we turn to Eastern thought. In Zen Buddhism, particularly the Soto tradition of Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), practice itself is the realization of Enlightenment. Dōgen famously wrote: "To practice the Way singleheartedly is, in itself, enlightenment. There is no gap between practice and enlightenment or zazen and daily life." [11] . In other words, each action contains its own completeness; the distinction between "doing" and "becoming free" dissolves. Dōgen further teaches that when we fully engage in "just sitting" or "just bowing" — without chasing some future reward — we encounter a state of wholeness: "Each thing is enough, just as it is. It's complete." [12] . And he adds, "If you understand this, you are completely free." [13] . Although Zen does not speak of "creation" in the Western sense, its notion that each consummated act is enlightenment suggests a parallel: when an act is fully carried out, what

remains is freedom of mind. Similarly, Zen emphasizes non-attachment to outcomes: nothing truly belongs to us to the point of hindering freedom. In summary, Zen provides a model of freedom as the immediate, present state of completeness that follows genuine action.

Gap in the Literature

In sum, the literature offers three pictures: classical freedom as non-constraint (Hobbes/Mill), existential freedom as endless creation of self (Sartre/Nietzsche), and contemplative freedom as present-minded completeness (Rilke/Zen). **What is missing** is an account that unites creation with a final state: how does freedom emerge at the very end of creative effort? Existing theories presuppose constant potential or indeterminacy; they do not capture a freedom that is achieved only by finishing something. We propose to fill this gap by treating creativity and its completion as the key to a new ontological category of freedom.

Methodology: An Existential‑Phenomenological Approach

To explore this question, we adopt an **existential‑phenomenological** method. This means we examine lived experience and existential meaning in concrete creative activity, without prior conceptual assumptions. Phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) encourages us to "return to the things themselves": how does a person experience freedom in the context of creation? We will analyze first-person narratives (literary sources, artistic testimonies) and philosophical descriptions as phenomenological "data." This involves bracketing our inherited theories of freedom and describing the structure of experience: the feeling of being constrained by a project, the shift when it is done, the sense of fullness or emptiness after.

Existentialism informs our ontology: we take seriously that human beings are self-creating subjects. Our question – freedom after creation – is in a way an inversion of Sartreanism. Instead of focusing on choices made in unbounded freedom, we focus on what happens when a mode of being (the mode of creating) reaches its conclusion. We will describe how the I-world relationship changes at that point. This approach allows us to incorporate cross-cultural insights (e.g. Dōgen's integration of practice/enlightenment) without forcing them into Western ideological categories.

Analytically, we will proceed by **thought-experiment** and interpretation: we envision the process of creation (writing a poem, crafting a sculpture, solving a problem) as a temporal passage. We identify phases (conception, struggle, completion) and ask: at what moment does freedom appear or transform? We scrutinize paradoxes (being tied to the task yet liberated by vision), emotional tones (sacrifice vs. release), and existential meanings (identity affirmed by action). In doing so, we will cite philosophical texts and poems that phenomenologically illuminate these phases. Our goal is not historical exegesis but conceptual synthesis: constructing a coherent philosophical concept of **post‑creative freedom**.

The Paradox of Creation

Creativity inherently carries a paradox. On the one hand, creation seems to limit freedom: when one undertakes a project, one chooses a particular medium, form, and purpose. A writer must submit to grammar and genre; an engineer to physics and utility. In this process, the creator willingly imposes constraints. One might even say that creation entangles the creator with the work. For example, Michelangelo reputedly said of his sculpture David: "It was already in the stone, and I carved to set it free," implying that the act of creating was actually an excavation of latent form [14]. The artist is intensely bound to the material. In this sense, the very act of creating is in tension with freedom – we take up commitments and limitations.

Paradoxically, however, creation is also the exercise of freedom at its most vivid. Nietzsche captures this: one needs "chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star." The artist or thinker must break free from norms to create something new. In that moment of inspiration the ego feels unbounded; the self acts as sovereign. The paradox, then, is that **creation both restricts and expands**. While making art, one submits to the medium; yet the impulse to shape the medium comes from the self's unlimited imagination.

How can these be reconciled? We propose that the paradox dissolves at completion. While engaged in creation, freedom is a project: one is not yet free because one is doing. But when the work is done, something remarkable happens. The impulse that drove the creation has been fully expressed; the potentialities embodied in the project have actualized. At that moment, two forms of liberation coincide: (1) one is freed from the necessity of action (no more labor awaits), and (2) one is freed in the fullness of the created form (its existence no longer depends on the creator's will).

Consider the mythic example of God and the Sabbath. In Genesis, after God completes creation, He rests on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1–3). This divine rest can be read as an archetype of freedom after labor: God's creative purpose is achieved, and thus He enters a state of completion (a holy rest). By analogy, humans may glimpse a personal Sabbath: after finishing a long project, the mind enjoys a still, liberated state. This contrasts sharply with the Hobbesian notion (which applies even to water and stones) that freedom is static absence of obstacle [2]. Here freedom is dynamic: it is the transition from "creating" to "being done."

We can illustrate this phenomenologically. Suppose a poet toils over a poem for weeks. During composition, each phrase feels like a demand: there is a right word to find, a feeling to capture. The poet is "in chains" of perfection and doubt. The creator must write, revise, delete — confined by the project's telos. This is not freedom in the usual sense; the poet cannot just do anything, but only those things relevant to finishing the poem. Yet when the final draft is complete and put aside, the poet feels at once exhaustion and expansiveness. The manuscript is out of the way; no more compulsion remains. If the poet was seeking freedom, it arrives at the end: the choice of every line has been made, the potential is now actual.

This illustrates the paradox: **freedom comes not at the beginning but at the end of creation**. At the start, all things are possible but nothing accomplished; at the middle, one is bound by the task; at the end, one is free from the task and enriched by its fruits. The paradox dissolves when we see freedom as that final release.

In phenomenological terms, the end-of-creation freedom is characterized by two feelings: relief from obligation and pride in completion. The relief (the outside obstacle no longer operative) echoes Hobbes's negative freedom, but here the "obstacle" is self-imposed limitation rather than external. The pride (or joy) in completion is positive: one can enjoy or use the creation. Traditional theories do not capture this dual nature. They ignore that one's own project can act as an impediment (until done) and that only after finishing can one say "Nothing more is demanded of me."

Thus, in the paradox of creation we see the need for a new category of freedom: **the free state of completion**. We will argue that this state has an ontological quality distinct from mere absence-of-restraint, one that has been anticipated by poets and practitioners but not fully theorized in philosophy.

Ownership and Detachment

A related theme is the creator's relation of **ownership** and **detachment** toward the work. On the one hand, creative acts often involve a strong sense of possession: the artist claims the piece as "my work," the inventor as "my invention." This ownership can even be legal (copyright) or egoistic ("I, a genius, produced this masterpiece"). However, true liberation often lies in letting go of that ownership. The creation, once completed, must be released into the world without clinging.

This tension is noted in both Eastern and Western traditions. In the Bhagavad Gita (Hindu scripture), Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna to act with "detachment from the fruits" of action (nishkama karma). Analogously, the Buddhist concept of non-attachment teaches that clinging to outcomes binds us. In creative work, holding on too tightly can become a source of suffering: the poem is never good enough, the painting never finished, the theory never complete. Only by relinquishing personal ownership – by dedicating the work to its own sake rather than to one's ego – can the creator find peace.

Dōgen's Zen resonates here: as we saw, he says "each thing is enough, just as it is… It's complete" [12]. When the creative act is done wholeheartedly (attended fully in each moment), its completeness becomes apparent. Dōgen even writes that this completeness (perfection of each act) makes one "completely free" [13]. Notice that Dōgen's freedom comes from seeing each act as whole, not by accumulation. Once the task is finished and accepted as such, there is nothing more to possess or perfect. The work "owns itself," in a way, and the creator is free to move on.

From a psychological perspective, this parallels the advice often given to writers or artists: Finish the damn thing and move on. A student thesis is no longer in the student's mind once defended. The composer who has conducted his symphony's premiere hears it exist independently. In these moments, letting go is the key to freedom. If we continue to obsess ("Should I revise? What did they think? It's my baby!"), we remain enslaved by the creation.

So we identify a structural move: **From ownership to detachment leads to freedom.** In the process of creation, ownership is necessary (one must take charge of the project). But in the final moment, detachment is liberating. The agent must learn that "the work" is not an extension of his ego but a transient manifestation. When the creation is complete, any attempt to retain it (e.g. to hoard it, to control its reception) actually impedes the freedom on offer. Freedom comes when the creator releases all claims.

This is not mere renunciation: it is the realization that after completion the world already has the creation. The creative act is done; the world is changed by it. The creator now stands as any other person, no longer uniquely bound to that one project. In other words, at the moment of letting go, the creator's life expands beyond that project. This expansion is itself a kind of freedom: new possibilities open up precisely because the old has been fully realized and let be.

Philosopher existentialists have alluded to this. Sartre's phrase that "I can only estimate [love] if I have performed an action by which it is defined and ratified" [8] implies that once an action is taken, its meaning is secured and one can let the future pass, up to one's responsibility. We extend this: once a creative act is performed (and ratified by completion), its "possibility space" is actualized. The self no longer owes that task to the world. Therefore, the self is free to respond in new ways.

In sum, freedom resides in a creative dialectic: **possessing the work (commitment)** until its end, and then **dispossessing it (detachment)**. This resembles the Zen idea of non-attachment, but here attached detachment is dialectical: attachment is the means, detachment the release. Unlike liberal freedom

(which ignores internal ties) or Sartrean freedom (which dwells on initial commitment), this view sees freedom born of **completion and release**.

Self‑Proof and Identity

A third facet is how creative completion bears on identity and self‑proof. We all seek assurance that our lives have meaning, and creation often plays that role. In making something out of nothing, the agent affirms his capacities and values. Yet identity itself is not pre-given – it is "made" through action (Sartre's dictum, "existence precedes essence"). We argue that creative acts prove the self to the self and others, and this proof culminates at completion.

Sartre's story of the young Frenchman (caring for his mother vs. joining the resistance) is instructive here [15] [7]. The youth ultimately stays with his mother, and Sartre observes: "I may say, 'I love my mother enough to remain with her,' if actually I have remained with her. I can only estimate the strength of this affection if I have performed an action by which it is defined and ratified" [8]. The feeling (love) is "formed by the deeds that one does; therefore I cannot consult it as a guide to action" [7]. In short, identity (the strong filial son) is only proved by the act (staying with her). The youth's very self is confirmed at the moment he fulfills his choice.

Similarly, when one completes a creative work, one concretizes something about oneself. Until then, one might only intend to create ("I am a writer," "I believe I have this gift"). But it is in the act of creating that the self is demonstrated. Only when the canvas is painted or the poem finished does "I am an artist" have real weight. As the Sartrean example shows, one cannot rely on an inner essence to define the project. One becomes an artist by being through art. The final product is a testament to the creator's existence and choices.

Thus creation is a mode of self-verification. The identity of a person is testified by what he leaves behind. After completion, one can point to the work as a self-declaration. Until then, the identity is hypothetical. For instance, a philosopher engaged in research only truly knows himself as such when he publishes; a leader only knows his own resolve when he has acted on it to its end. This is why some feel incomplete until their major project is done: because their "self" feels unproved.

When the creative act is finished, the self is at that moment ratified. In that instant, something shifts: the artist is simultaneously humble (just a human who made something) and exalted (the maker of a creation). This transition changes how one experiences freedom. During creation, one's identity is wrapped up in achieving the goal ("I must complete this or I fail"). Afterward, one exists somewhat apart from that identity: the deed has been done, and the person can now see themselves from outside that project.

This aligns with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception: the creator "rides" the wave of creation while it forms, then takes a step back. We are essentially discussing what Heidegger would call fulfillment. The project is a potential, and its realization is actualization of that potential. Once actualized, the being achieves a new mode – perhaps akin to Aristotle's eudaimonia, a flourishing that follows virtuous activity. The difference is that here the activity is creative.

Importantly, this self‑proof aspect means that freedom after creation is also a freedom of selfhood. When one has done something definitive, one's past actions form a completed narrative. The future is open again to new chapters. One is not the same person who started – one is "the one who finished it." That claim to identity offers confidence and new latitude. In existential terms, the burden of proof (to

oneself and the world) is lightened. You have built something in the world; you can now be free to build something else, or simply be.

Thus **self‑proofing through completion** contributes to ontological freedom. It transforms responsibility (which Sartre stresses) into affirmation. Before doing, responsibility feels heavy ("I must achieve this"). After doing, responsibility is reconciled ("I have done it"). This reconciliation is itself freeing. One's essence has been momentarily self-crafted and can relax. In Rilke's words, standing before the completed work (the "brilliant torso" of Apollo) demands: "You must change your life" [10]. The creation attests to a new self which must now live up to that act – but it also liberates one from uncertainty about who one is.

Contemplation and Stillness

What follows completion, phenomenologically, is a period of stillness and contemplation. In creation we have contrasted dynamism (project in motion) with final rest. After finishing, the natural impulse is to reflect. This reflective stillness is a crucial component of the freedom state. It is a time when the mind is free to wander through new or old territories – even sometimes beyond the personal into the universal.

Eastern traditions particularly highlight this. In Zen, the act of "just sitting" after zazen practice embodies a state where action has ceased and one witnesses the work (practice) that has been done [12]. Dōgen's remark, "Each thing is enough, just as it is… If you understand this, you are completely free" [12] [13], implies that when the moment is complete, further doing is unnecessary. Then one can simply be. In such moments, the distinction between creator and created can blur. The sense of a separate self doing the work recedes, and one merges with the larger field of experience. This is the essence of contemplation: open, undirected, but full of the residue of prior action.

Let us illustrate: a musician plays the final note of a concerto and then sits in silence, absorbing the reverberations. The piece is finished; there is nothing more to do. In that silence, time seems to stretch. The musician experiences peace, awe, perhaps love. There is freedom in noticing the details of the auditorium, the faces in the crowd, the ambient quiet. With no pressing agenda, the musician freely attends to what arises. The mind is free to wonder: "Did I express what I wanted? How did the audience feel? What now?" But importantly, none of these thoughts force action. They may even be gently entertained as thoughts, not obligations.

This stage often brings joyful emptiness. One is "empty" of tasks, but filled by the achievement. In our imaginative scenario with the poet: after finishing and sharing the poem, perhaps the poet walks through a garden. The ideas of the poem still echo in the mind, but the poet is now noticing the feel of the breeze, the colors of the flowers. The mind, no longer exclusively on the poem, feels free to engage with the world. This is a form of freedom: mental spaciousness after intense focus.

Psychologically, this might be compared to "flow" experiences, but in reverse. Csikszentmihalyi's flow is about deep immersion. Here we consider the opposite: **post-flow**. After a flow activity ends, one often feels a clear, expanded awareness. One feels contentment, vitality, and freedom to choose a new activity or rest. It's a calm after the storm. The world feels open.

Of course, not all post-creative periods are serene. Sometimes one feels anticlimax or doubt ("maybe it wasn't good enough?"). But even that is a kind of freedom: one is free from the obligation to keep working and can even critique the work. The very fact that reflection is optional signals freedom.

What philosophical significance does this hold? It suggests that freedom after creation involves a **temporal renormalization**. While creating, time is dominated by the goal (future-oriented). Afterward, time opens up (present- and past-oriented). In a sense, one escapes time's grip. In Eastern terms, the ordinary duality of subject-object can dissolve: the subject no longer acts as a subject bound to a project, but simply stands as one being among beings. Sartre's analysis of temporality in Being and Nothingness notes that the self projects itself into the future; here the projection is temporarily complete, allowing for a different mode of being.

We could say, borrowing Dōgen's language, that in stillness one "realizes time" – in Japanese uji (being-time) – in a pure form. After action, the moment of being belongs to the world in its wholeness. Therefore, freedom in contemplation is ontological: it is the being-of-the-creature appreciating the being-of-the-creation.

To summarize: after creation, the agent enters a contemplative stillness. This is both a reward and a freedom. It is characterized by absence of compulsive doing and by holistic awareness of presence. The mind's usual restlessness is quieted by the satisfaction of accomplishment. This stillness itself is an expression of freedom – it is freedom of mind, not in the political sense, but in the existential sense of leisure for the spirit.

Ontological Restructuring of Freedom

We are now in a position to articulate our central thesis: **freedom is an ontological state achieved through the completion of creative effort**. This challenges and extends the traditional accounts.

Ontological state means that we conceive of freedom not as a mere fact (no obstacles, or ability) but as a mode of being, a condition of the self once something fundamental has occurred. In classical liberal thought, freedom is a condition of the external world (no chains) or of power (capability). In existentialism, freedom is a permanent aspect of human being (always free to choose). In contrast, we propose that freedom can be an **attained state**: one enters into it when certain ontological criteria are met. What are those criteria? Our analysis suggests two main conditions: (1) the creative project is completed (telos fulfilled), and (2) the creator has emotionally and cognitively let go of further obligation to it (detachment achieved). When both conditions hold, the self transitions into what we call the freedom-after-creation state.

What characterizes this state? It has the following features:

- **Completeness**: The self is now whole with respect to that project. The potential that once hung over the creator is now fully realized or resolved. There is no lack in relation to that project.
- **Freedom from obligation**: External necessity from the project has vanished. The subject is no longer in thrall to any internal or external voice demanding action on that matter.
- **Wholeness of being**: The self feels more "one piece" or integrated. The completion has woven an identity thread through one's being; one stands in the world with that narrative fulfilled.
- **Readiness for new beginnings**: This state often yields a readiness to begin something new or to enjoy undirected existence.

Critically, this state is not simply the continuation of negative freedom. In Hobbesian terms, the obstacles to action were internal (the need to finish) rather than external. Once removed, one is free to move or not. But our concept is richer: it implies a positive sense of fullness. It is analogous to an Aristotelian entelechy – the thing has reached its end or purpose. Here the agent, as the subject of the project, is made complete along with it.

We should emphasize how this view is distinct:

- **Not mere absence of impediments**: After creation, there may still be external constraints (bills to pay, new jobs, laws) – yet the feeling of freedom can be intense. Hobbes's physical freedom is insufficient. Instead, the key is internal liberation from self-imposed demands.
- **Not just potential to act**: Mill's liberty is about what one can do. Here we emphasize what one doesn't have to do anymore. Moreover, the self has been proven to act; so the potential is now actual.
- **Not ongoing radical choice**: Sartre's eternal freedom disregards finality. Our freedom is bound to a finality. It is liberation through having decided. Sartre sees despair when outcomes are uncertain; we see serenity when they are settled.
- **Not mystical emptiness**: While there are resonances with Nirvana or Moksha (in Eastern thought freedom can mean release from karmic cycle), our focus is specifically on the aftermath of creation, not on mystical escape. Nonetheless, we might say this state shares with enlightenment a sense of oneness and release, but it is concretely tied to human activity.

In other words, we propose that **completion reconfigures the subject's ontology**. The self moves from becoming (incomplete, not-yet) to being (complete, now). Freedom in this sense is an emergent property of that ontological shift. It cannot exist as long as the state is "not complete." Only by reaching the end does one enter the freedom state.

To further understand this, consider the mode of time for the self. Before completion, temporality was oriented toward the future goal. After completion, one can dwell in the present or past, unattached to a looming task. Heidegger might say that the self moves from a state of "thrown projectivity" (Dasein's character) into a state of "having-been." There is a limit-experience here: one has experienced the limit (the end) of a possibility. This, in a way, transforms one's being; it is akin to crossing a threshold into a different existential category.

One implication is that **freedom is not a single, univocal concept**. We inherit a broad notion of freedom, but it may be more accurate to speak of freedoms. There is political/legal freedom, psychological freedom, existential freedom – and now post-creative freedom. Each is realized differently. Our freedom-after-creation is specifically an ontological condition, not easily reducible to the others. It is the freedom of a person who has fully done what they set out to do, and thus is new.

This explains why neither liberals nor existentialists have theorized it: they never considered that completion could be an ontological cause. Liberalism assumes projects continue (we always act, or could act, hence freedom is continuous). Existentialism assumes essence is forever unwritten (so no final freedom). We must extend beyond these by looking at the end of the narrative.

It is worth noting that in ordinary life this idea is familiar in certain contexts. Graduates celebrate freedom after finishing studies; retirees claim freedom after ending careers; parents feel a surge of freedom once their last child leaves home. These are ordinary recognitions that after completing a long-term project, one does feel liberated in a special way. We are seeking to legitimize and understand this intuition philosophically.

Conclusion

We have proposed that freedom comes from the end. Examining thinkers across traditions, we found repeated intimations of this idea: that action and freedom have a dialectical relationship, and that only when an action's purpose is fulfilled does a deeper freedom emerge. Unlike Hobbes's abstraction of

freedom as mere absence of walls [2], or Mill's formula of non-interference [16], or Sartre's endless project of self-creation [1], our concept identifies freedom as a concrete state of being that is achieved.

Our existential-phenomenological analysis identified key components: the **paradox of creation** (where making binds and releases), **ownership/detachment** (taking responsibility then letting go), **identity formation** (self-worth as proven by finished acts), and **contemplative stillness** (the reflective peace after acting). Each contributes to the final picture: a transformed self, standing in the aftermath of creation, is **ontologically free** in a unique sense. This freedom is not just a variable one's condition (like power) but a qualitative mode of existence.

Crucially, this does resonate, though non-obviously, with aspects of each tradition. Hobbes and Mill lacked it; Sartre implicitly denied it (freedom as perpetual choice); Nietzsche focused on power-to-create but not on rest. Rilke and Zen came closest, encouraging transformation through art and practice. By synthesizing these threads, we argue for a new concept: freedom as the rest in which one basks when creation is done.

This perspective has implications. It suggests that the meaning of freedom in human life has a strong teleological element: we attain freedom by **endings** as well as beginnings. It valorizes completion and wholeness. For philosophy, it urges us to expand the ontology of freedom to include achieved states, not just potentialities. For practice, it suggests embracing what happens after success, not only during the struggle.

In conclusion, Freedom Comes from the End means precisely that freedom, properly understood, is **the end of creation**. It is the ontological state one enters when one's creative purpose is fulfilled. Recognizing this reconfigures the freedom debate: freedom is not only what lets us begin, but what greets us when we arrive.

Sources: We have drawn on primary philosophical texts (Hobbes, Mill, Sartre) and relevant poetic and religious traditions. Hobbes's Leviathan is cited via a modern analysis [2], Mill's On Liberty directly [16], Sartre's Existentialism is a Humanism [1] [15] [7], Rilke's Archaic Torso of Apollo [10], and Dōgen's teachings as reported in Soto Zen interpretations [11] [12] [13].

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